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ABSTRACT

Data from the National Survey of Children (Waves 1 and 3), a longitudinal survey of 2,000 children who were between the ages of 7 and 11 during the first wave in 1976 and between the ages of 16 and 20 during the third wave in 1987, were analyzed to examine the impact of paternal involvement during childhood as well as the ongoing father-child relationship on sons' and daughters' gender role orientations and attitudes in young adulthood. The results indicated that, compared to females, males placed more importance on success at work and less importance on being a parent. Females, compared to males, were less likely to believe in traditional roles and more likely to believe that couples should share housework. While there were significant gender differences in role orientations and attitudes, there were no significant differences by father presence. Whether or not a father was present at time 1 and whether or not that presence changed over time had no significant relationship to the development of gender role orientations and attitudes. This finding supports the contention that research on the development of gender may need to pay less attention to father presence and focus more on the effects of the nature of fathering. Data analyses indicated that the ongoing father-child relationship was more important than paternal involvement in childhood and that the effects were greater for sons than for daughters. (NB)

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PATERNAL INVOLVEMENT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF GENDER EXPECTATIONS IN SONS AND DAUGHTERS

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PATERNAL INVOLVEMENT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF GENDER EXPECTATIONS IN SONS AND DAUGHTERS

ABSTRACT

A longitudinal survey of 2000 children is used to examine the impact of paternal involvement during childhood as well as the ongoing father/child relationship on sons' and daughters' gender role orientations and attitudes in young adulthood. We argue that the development of egalitarian views regarding work and parenthood depends less on the extent of father participation in family labor and more on the nature of that involvement. Data analyses indicate that the ongoing father/child relationship is more important than paternal involvement in childhood and that the effects are greater for sons than daughters.

PATERNAL INVOLVEMENT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF GENDER EXPECTATIONS IN SONS AND DAUGHTERS

The effect of the structure of the family on the development of gender has been of interest to social scientists for several decades (Malinowsky, 1930; Parsons, 1959; Moynihan, 1965; Chodorow, 1978; Rubin, 1984). More recently the structure of the family has become a political issue. Academicians as well as politicians often conclude that the "ideal" family is one in which a male and a female serve as gender role models and socialize children for their appropriate adult roles. Some scholars have suggested that role symmetry, by which both mothers and fathers are involved in paid and unpaid work in the family, may encourage children to develop egalitarian expectations of work, marriage and family. Hoffman (1983) speculates that if fathers assume an equal parental role, children might be less likely to acquire rigid gender conceptions. Chodorow (1978) and Rubin (1984) focus on the importance of infant bonding to both a male and female in the development of a balanced gender identity.

However, while theory and research have speculated on the effects of dual parenting on children, most research actually focuses on the effects of role symmetry on the adults themselves, not on their children (Ross et al., 1983; Hoffman, 1983; Gerson, 1985; Ulbrich, 1988; Zussman, 1987). Additionally, the consequences of a father's involvement in the family and the way in which the consequences vary according to the nature of that involvement has not been adequately tested. This study uses national longitudinal panel survey data to explore the process by which father involvement affects the development of gender.

While taking into account mother's involvement in work and family, the primary focus of this paper is on the nature of fathers' involvement on the development of children's later adult gender role orientations and attitudes. In this paper, it is hypothesized that the presence and the level of involvement of fathers in family does not necessarily contribute to the development of egalitarian expectations. Men who are involved in the parenting role but who adopt dominating parenting styles may influence children to develop non-egalitarian expectations. In contrast, fathers who deviate from patriarchally defined systems of parenting and family control may positively affect the development of egalitarian attitudes and orientations in children. Thus, we argue that the presence and level of paternal involvement may be less significant in the development of son's and daughter's views and expectations than the nature of that involvement.

THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

In examining the role of the father in the family, social scientists have built an extensive literature in which the father's socio-economic status (See Hess, 1970; Kohn, 1969) or his "presence" or "absence" was the primary independent variable explaining outcomes in children ranging from achievement orientation, self-esteem, dating and sexual behavior, delinquent behavior, and gender identification (Biller, 1974; Shinn, 1978; Herzog and Sudia, 1973; Kinnaird and Gerrard, 1986; Kagel and Schilling, 1985). However, while taking into account the effects of father presence and the status that he confers on the family,

this research has failed to explore the actual behavior or involvement of fathers within the family.

In contrast to this previous research, recent feminist scholars have been particularly interested in shared parental roles and father involvement (Chodorow and Contratto, 1982). At the psychological level, Chodorow (1978) and Rubin (1983) argue that the fact that women do the primary parenting results in sex differences in personality and encourages the development of unbalanced gender identities in which females become "over connected" and males "under connected." Rubin's (1983:204) solution to this problem is the family in which both parents equally nurture the children from the moment of birth. However, while Chodorow (1978) and Rubin (1983) emphasize the significance of dual parent bonding in the development of gender identity, they have not elaborated on the differential effects on children's later gender role orientations due to variations in the nature of fathering.

At the societal level, other scholars (Lamb, 1986, 1987; Stern, 1991; Pleck, 1979) have traced historical changes in father involvement and perceptions of the "ideal" father. The history of fatherhood according to Lamb (1986, 1987) has four distinct phases: the moral teacher, breadwinner, sex-role model and the new "nurturant" father. It is generally agreed that fathers historically have been "outsiders" in the central family process and that only recently has the ideal been for more paternal participation in internal family relations (Lamb, 1986, 1987;

Stern, 1991; Pleck, 1979). However, despite this changing ideal, LaRossa (1988) and others (Franklin, 1988; Furstenberg, 1988; Lamb, Pleck and Levine, 1986; Coverman and Sheley, 1986) believe that changes in paternal interaction with children over the past several decades has been small.

While macro level researchers have documented the emergence of a new ideal father type in which men are expected to participate more in internal family relations, research has not adequately examined the nature of this involvement and its effects on children's gender role expectations. Hoffman (1983) has speculated that if fathers assume an equal parental role, children might be less likely to acquire rigid gender conceptions; however, her major interest is in the reduction of role strain experienced by working mothers when fathers participate in household and child care duties. Krantz (1988) notes that the physical absence of fathers is no more harmful than their emotional absence, even when physically present. Yet again, her study does not focus on variations in the level of emotional involvement or the nature of fathering.

In this paper, we address the limitations of this previous research and build on the previous theoretical developments. More specifically, our interest focuses on the nature of father involvement and the development of children's gender attitudes regarding orientations to work and parenthood in their adult lives. In this study we argue that the effect of paternal involvement on the development of gender attitudes and expectations depends not

primarily on paternal presence nor even the amount of involvement but rather the nature of that involvement. We argue that patriarchally defined fathering styles may influence children to accept a system of male dominance and develop non-egalitarian attitudes and expectations. In contrast, fathers who reject male dominant fathering styles may positively affect the development of egalitarian attitudes and orientations in children.

DATA AND MEASUREMENTS

This study uses national longitudinal panel survey data drawn from the National Survey of Children, Wave I, 1976, and Wave III, 1987 (Zill et al., 1990).[1] This is a longitudinal survey of 2000 children age 7 to 11 during the first wave in 1976 and age 16 to 20 in 1987. This data set allows for the examination of "family" and paternal involvement during childhood and the subsequent effects on gender role attitudes and orientations in regard to work, marriage, and family once the children have reached young adulthood. An important strength of this study is that the questions regarding the nature of fathering are asked of the children themselves rather than the parents. Thus, it is possible to note the effects on gender development of fathering as perceived and experienced by the child.

To test if the development of gender attitudes and expectations depends on the nature of father involvement rather than simply father presence, we first examine the relationship between different combinations of father presence and gender attitudes and expectations. The study categorizes 494 female and

479 male respondents according to the presence of a father in the home at time 1 (1976) and time 2 (1987). The categories include (1) no father present at time 1 or 2; (2) a father or step-father present at time 1 and the same father or step-father present at time 2; (3) a father or step-father present at time one and a different step-father present at time 2; and (4) a father or step-father present at time 1 and no father or step-father present at time 2. These categories of respondents are then compared to examine the effects of father presence and changing father presence on gender role orientations and expectations.

The second part of the analysis selects 443 male and 423 female respondents who report having a father or step-father present in the home at time 1. Time 1 measures of the father's personal and parenting characteristics are used in ordinary least squares regression analysis to determine the effects of the nature of fathering on the subsequent gender role attitudes and orientations of males and females measured at time 2.

Measures of gender role orientations include responses to the following questions, with responses ranging from (1) not important to (4) extremely important: orientation toward work - "How important is success at work?" and orientation toward parenting - "How important is being a parent?" Measures of gender role attitudes include responses to the following questions with responses ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree: attitudes toward traditional roles - "It is better if the husband

works and the wife stays home" and attitudes toward housework - "Couples should share housework."

The measures of father characteristics include education and age at the time of the survey. Age is broken into five categories including (1) 26 years or younger, (2) 27 to 31 years, (3) 32 to 36 years, (4) 37 to 41 years, and (5) 42 years or over. Categories of education range from (1) primary only to (5) college graduation or higher. Measures of the nature of fathering at time one include: (1) the child's perception of level of strictness representing authoritarianism in terms of inflexibility in enforcing rules ranging from (1) low strictness to (4) high strictness; (2) treatment of the child as a grown-up representing a connected rather than a hierarchical approach to the father/child relationship ranging from (1) father treats you like a baby to (3) father treats you like a grownup; and a measure of father involvement (3) Time spent with child representing whether or not the child perceives that he or she receives adequate time from the father ranging from (0) not enough time to (1) enough time. Also included with fathering characteristics at time 1 is a measure of whether or not the mother acted as a full time homemaker.

The analysis also takes into account the effects of the ongoing father/child relationship measured at time 2. The variables include closeness to father derived from responses to the question, "How close do you feel to your father?" with responses ranging from (1) not very close to (4) extremely close. Desire to imitate father is measured from responses to the question, "How

much do you want to be like your father?" with responses ranging from (1) not very much to (4) very much. Love from father is measured according to responses to the question, "Does your father give you the right amount of love?" with responses ranging from (1) much less than the right amount to (3) the right amount or more. In addition to fathering characteristics, the analysis contains measures of the respondents' personal characteristics including education and minority status.

RESULTS

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that there are significant differences by gender for each of the role orientation and attitude measures. Compared to females, males place more importance on success at work and less importance on being a parent. In regard to attitudes, females, compared to males, are less likely to believe in traditional roles and more likely to believe that couples should share housework. However, while there are significant gender differences in role orientations and attitudes, there are no significant differences by father presence. Whether or not a father is present at time 1 and whether or not that presence changes over time has no significant relationship to the development of gender role orientations and attitudes. This finding supports the contention of the present study that research on the development of gender may need to pay less attention to father presence and focus more on the effects of the nature of fathering.

[Table 1 About Here]

The results of the regression analyses exploring the effects of the nature of fathering and other variables on the development of gender role orientations and attitudes are presented in Table 2 for males and Table 3 for females. For males, the results indicate that the respondent's and the father's personal characteristics do not significantly affect gender role orientations. Rather, background fathering and the ongoing father/son relationship measures are significant. Males who, during childhood, had a mother who worked as a full-time homemaker report greater orientations toward work. Also, males who, during childhood, reported that their father spent enough time with them have a greater orientation toward work. Consistent with Lamb's (1986, 1987) third phase of fathering, these affects may be due to role modeling within the family. Boys who spend more time with their father may be more fully socialized into the work role thus influencing their future gender role orientations. This interpretation of role modeling is supported by the finding that as young adults, males who report a greater desire to imitate the father report a higher orientation toward work.

[Table 2 About Here]

In contrast to the effects of time spent with father and desire to imitate father, other measures indicate that in addition to role modeling, gender role orientations are affected by father nurturance. Young adult males who indicate that they receive enough love from their father report significantly lower

orientations toward work. Also, those males reporting higher levels of closeness to their father report higher orientations toward parenting.

Thus, males may learn stereotypical gender orientations from having traditional family role models such as full-time homemaker mothers and from spending more time with fathers. However, indications of a nurturing, close father/son relationship, characteristic of Lamb's (1986, 1987) final phase of fathering, are related to less stereotypical orientations for males. As hypothesized then, the results indicate that varying parenting styles may have differential impacts on the development of gender orientations. Therefore, it is important to explore the effects of the nature of father involvement rather than simply father presence or amount of involvement.

While background fathering factors and measures of the ongoing father/son relationship have effects on gender orientations, it is interesting to note that these factors are not significant in determining attitudes. The only parenting variable of significance for males is that of having full-time homemaker mothers. Males who, during childhood, reported having a mother who worked as a full-time homemaker, are more likely to support traditional family/work roles and are less likely to report a belief that couples should share housework. In regard to personal characteristics, those with higher levels of education are less likely to agree with traditional roles and are more likely to believe that couples should share housework. Males with a minority

status also report lower levels of agreement with traditional family/work roles. These results indicate that while the development of attitudes may be affected by exposure to traditional family roles, they are more strongly affected by personal characteristics.

As presented in Table 3, the results suggest that the nature of fathering is less important in the development of gender for girls than for boys. Females' gender role orientations and attitudes are shaped by their personal characteristics. Young women who have attained higher levels of education report lower levels of agreement with traditional family/work roles and are more likely to agree that couples should share housework. Also, minority women indicate a stronger orientation toward work. Though the style of fathering and the father/daughter relationship are not significant, father characteristics do affect gender role attitudes in daughters. Young women with more highly educated fathers are more likely to believe that couples should share housework and those with older fathers express a stronger belief in traditional roles. These findings in regard to father characteristics suggest an intergenerational transmission of attitudes from fathers to daughters rather than the development of attitudes through the nature of father involvement.

[Table 3 About Here]

Discussion and Conclusions

Although the regression models for both males and females are not strong, they do have implications for understanding the

relationship between fathering and the development of gender orientations and attitudes.[2] In addition, the results have significant implications for the future of research on the father/child relationship.

Higher levels of father involvement, measured in terms of time, increase traditional orientations in sons. However, when fathers exhibit a close, nurturing ongoing father/son relationship, nontraditional orientations are more likely to be expressed. It should be emphasized that the significant effects of the nurturing father/son bond are measured in young adulthood and that the childhood measures of fathering patterns are not significant. It is not possible to assess whether the differences in the effects of these two sets of variables are due to variations in the time of measurement, childhood versus young adulthood, or to the effects of nurturance and bonding versus strictness and hierarchical patterns of interaction. To test for both of these possibilities it is necessary to measure the nurturing aspects of fathering during childhood. However, such measures are not available in this data set. In the 1976 wave, questions regarding physical nurturance such as 'hugging' were asked only in regard to mothers unless a mother was not present. Only recently have researchers begun to assess the nurturing dimensions of fathering and even now this assessment is limited. While scholars are acknowledging the emergence of the 'nurturing father' phase (Lamb 1986, 1987), researchers are still focusing on father involvement measured in terms of time in childcare, etc. Studies have documented that the

increased involvement of fathers over the past decade is very limited, nevertheless the present research points to the need for researchers to focus on the nurturing aspects of fatherhood in data gathering.

In regard to gender differences, the time involvement of fathers during childhood and the ongoing father/child relationship appear to be more important for boys than for girls. This finding may be a function of fathers being more involved in the family when there are sons (Marsiglio, 1991; Harris and Morgan, 1991) and thus have less of an effect on daughters' gender role development. Also, being raised in a full-time homemaker family appears to have more of an effect on boys than on girls. It is possible that boys raised in traditional family forms are more likely to accept the arrangement as appropriate while girls, who are more directly affected by the changing norms and emerging career choices for women, are less likely to adhere to traditional orientations.

The hypothesis that a patriarchal approach to fathering in childhood has a negative effect on the development of egalitarian gender orientations and attitudes is not supported. However, the results also reject the assumption of previous scholars that father presence and/or level of father involvement have positive effects on the egalitarian development of gender regardless of the nature of that involvement. The nature of fathering in young adulthood in the form of a close, nurturing father/son relationship does appear to encourage non-traditional orientations in males. Thus, programs and policies encouraging non-traditional attitudes in children,

especially males, should focus on the development of an on-going nurturing bond between fathers and offspring.

Despite the significant effects of the ongoing father/son relationship on gender orientations, the present research generally suggests that as it exists within U.S. society, fathering has very little impact on the development of gender, possibly due to the overall low levels of father involvement. To more adequately assess the effects of the varying styles of fathering on the development of gender, future research may need to examine a less 'typical' sample of fathers who exhibit far higher than average levels of paternal involvement.

NOTES

[1] The data and tabulations utilized in this paper were made available by the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research. The data for National Survey of Children: Wave I, 1976, and Wave III, 1987 used in this study were originally collected and prepared by Nicholas Zill, Frank Furstenberg, Jr., James Peterson, and Kristin Moore. Neither the collector of the original data nor the Consortium bears any responsibility for the analysis or interpretations presented here

[2] Preliminary analyses examining the effects of mothering on gender role orientations and attitudes also did not show strong effects. The maternal factors that primarily effect gender role development in sons and daughters include labor force participation and personal characteristics such as education.

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Table 1. Differences in Mean Scores of Gender Role Orientations and Attitudes by Father Presence at Time 1 (1976) and Time 2 (1987).

	FEMALES (Time 1/Time 2)					MALES (Time 1/Time 2)				
VARIABLE	Total (N=494)	Not present/ not present (N=46)	Present/ present (N=309)	Present/ new father (N=68)	Present/ not present (N=71)	Total (N=479)	Not present/ not present (N=47)	Present/ present (N=304)	Present/ new father (N=70)	Present/ not present (N=58)
Importance of Success at Work	3.28**	3.28	3.26	3.37	3.25	3.41	3.55	3.41	3.36	3.33
Importance of Being a Parent	3.08**	3.33	3.07	2.94	3.11	2.75	2.53	2.81	2.69	2.71
It is Better if the Husband Works and the Wife Stays Home	2.33**	2.28	2.35	2.32	2.30	2.67	2.60	2.73	2.56	2.60
Couples Should Share Housework	4.52**	4.46	4.51	4.57	4.55	4.28	4.28	4.29	4.27	4.28

** Differences between females and males significant at $p<.01$
@ Differences between father categories significant at $p<.05$

Table 2. Regression Coefficients for Models of Gender Role Orientations and Attitudes of Young Adult Males.

	MALE SAMPLE (N=423)							
	Orientation toward work		Orientation toward parenting		Belief in Traditnl Family/Work Roles		Belief in Sharing Housework	
VARIABLE	b	beta	b	beta	b	beta	b	beta
Respondent Characteristics								
Education	.014	.032	.052	.079	-.099	-.139**	.062	.143**
Minority	.127	.063	-.103	-.035	-.346	-.108*	-.172	-.089
Father Characteristics								
Education	-.046	-.078	-.020	-.023	-.056	-.060	.007	.012
Age	-.014	-.023	.038	.042	-.001	-.001	.014	.024
Background Fathering								
Level of Strictness	.026	.037	.041	.040	.039	.036	.013	.019
Treatment of Child as a 'Grown Up'	.052	.057	-.011	-.008	-.013	-.009	.046	.052
Enough Time Spent with Child	.161	.118*	.048	.024	-.019	-.009	-.034	-.025
Mother as a Full Time Homemaker	-.150	-.110*	-.012	-.006	.229	.105*	-.134	-.101*
Current Father/ Son Relationship								
Closeness to Father	.050	.073	.157	.154**	.115	.105	-.063	-.094
Desire to Imitate Father	.078	.140**	.018	.021	.026	.029	.028	.051
Receives Enough Love From Father	-.082	-.097*	-.080	-.065	-.049	-.037	.030	.037
Constant	3.055**		1.680**		3.718**		3.400**	
F	3.432**		1.853		2.747**		1.883*	
R^2	.084		.047		.068		.048	
Adj. R^2	.060		.022		.044		.023	

* $p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$

Table 3. Regression Coefficients for Models of Gender Role Orientations and Attitudes of Young Adult Females.

	FEMALE SAMPLE (N=443)							
	Orientation toward work		Orientation toward parenting		Belief in Traditnl Family/Work Roles		Belief in Sharing Housework	
VARIABLE	b	beta	b	beta	b	beta	b	beta
Respondent Characteristics								
Education	-.004	-.008	-.018	-.028	-.073	-.101*	.091	.237**
Minority	.347	.174**	-.237	-.087	-.147	-.049	.023	.015
Father Characteristics								
Education	.033	.052	-.059	-.068	-.114	-.119*	.038	.075
Age	-.025	-.039	-.004	-.004	.098	.100*	-.013	-.025
Background Fathering								
Level of Strictness	.047	.061	-.003	-.002	-.060	-.052	.011	.018
Treatment of Child as a 'Grown Up'	.032	.032	-.052	-.039	-.047	-.032	-.002	-.003
Enough Time Spent with Child	-.046	-.030	.110	.053	.125	.055	.047	.039
Mother as a Full Time Homemaker	-.109	-.074	.069	.034	.164	.074	-.019	-.016
Current Father/ Daughter Relationship								
Closeness to Father	-.041	-.057	.048	.049	.059	.055	-.018	-.032
Desire to Imitate Father	.058	.092	.019	.022	.044	.046	-.038	-.074
Receives Enough Love From Father	.008	.009	-.060	-.049	-.004	-.003	-.018	-.025
Constant	3.048**		3.551**		3.166**		3.460**	
F	1.839*		.939		2.443**		3.103**	
R^2	.045		.023		.035		.073	

* $p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$